

LITERARY TERMINOLOGY -- ENGLISH

synonym

Two or more words with the same, or nearly the same, meaning; expressing or implying the same idea.

antonym

Two words with opposite, or nearly opposite, meanings.

homophone

Two words that sound alike but have different meanings whether spelled the same way or not.

denotation

The primary meaning a word or expression usually elicits.

connotation

The secondary meaning of a word or expression; implication.

character

A person or animal in a play, story, or novel.

protagonist

The main character in a drama, novel, or story, around whom the action centers.

antagonist

A person, or thing, who opposes or competes with another; adversary; opponent.

setting

The time, place, environment, and surrounding circumstances of an event in a story.

scene

The specific place in which any event, real or imagined, occurs in a story.

plot

The arrangement of the incidents, actions, or sequences of events in a story.

foreshadowing

A sign of something to come later in the story; indicate, suggest beforehand, hint, prefigure, or presage.

flashback

An interruption in the continuity of a story to present scenes or incidents that took place before the opening scene in order to make something in the present more clear.

mood

A particular state of mind or feeling; humor or temper; a predominant or prevailing feeling, spirit, or tone.

point of view

The place from which, or way in which, a story is told; viewed or considered. A mental attitude or opinion.

conflict

The problem in a story that triggers the action; to be antagonistic, incompatible, or contradictory; to be in opposition, clash.

internal conflict

Conflict that arises from within oneself: mental or physical.

external conflict

Conflict that comes to someone from outside of oneself whether it be an antagonist or nature.

climax

The final, culminating event in a series of events; the decisive turning point of the action in a story—usually the most intense event.

symbol

Something that stands for, represents, or suggests another thing; especially an object used to represent something abstract; emblem.

theme

The central or dominating idea, the “message,” implicit in a work, expressed through recurrent images, actions, characters, and symbols; usually inferred by the reader.

thesis

A concise sentence explaining the main idea of a written work, or of your own creation.

allegory

A story in which people, things, and happenings have a hidden or symbolic meaning; teaching or explaining ideas, moral principles.

analogy

A comparison of two or more objects; similarity in some respects between things otherwise unlike; partial resemblance.

allusion

A passing reference to historical or fictional characters, places, events, or to other works that the writer assumes the reader will recognize.

simile

A figure of speech that uses **like**, **as**, **as if**, or **than** to compare two essentially different objects, actions, or attributes that share some aspect of similarity.

metaphor

A figure of speech, an implied analogy, in which one thing is imaginatively compared to or identified with another thing.

imagery

The making of “pictures in words;” the pictorial quality of a literary work achieved through a collection of images; sensory details are used.

personification

A figure of speech in which human characteristics and sensibilities are attributed to animals, plants, inanimate objects, natural forces, or abstract ideas.

Irony

Using a word or phrase to mean the exact opposite of its literal or normal meaning. The difference between reality (what is) and appearance (what seems to be).